

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

For:

Immediate

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## NIEDERHAUSER NAMED WORLD FOOD PRIZE LAUREATE

DES MOINES, Iowa -- June 18, 1990 -- Dr. John S. Niederhauser has been named the 1990 laureate of the World Food Prize. The World Food Prize is the foremost international award to recognize, encourage and reward outstanding individual achievement in improving the world food system.

According to Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, founder of the World Food Prize and 1970 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, this year's laureate is proof that one person can truly make a difference toward alleviating world hunger and malnutrition.

"Without a doubt, Dr. Niederhauser's discoveries have had a dramatic impact on the food-deficient regions of the world. His achievements toward developing a blight-resistant potato variety have affected countries from Mexico to Bangladesh. Today, we recognize a lifetime of dedication and decades of innovation," Borlaug said.

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NIEDERHAUSER NAMED LAUREATE/ADD ONE

Because of Niederhauser's contributions toward the quantity, quality and availability of the potato in developing countries, he has been affectionately deemed "Mr. Potato" by his friends, colleagues and admirers all over the world.

In Mexico alone, Niederhauser's discoveries helped increase potato production from 134,000 metric tons between 1948 and 1952, to over 1 million metric tons between 1978 and 1982. The potato is now a major crop in Mexico.

An international crop scientist, Niederhauser has helped establish several organizations that assist third-world countries in creating and transferring production technology more efficiently. His leadership roles, strategic ideas and outstanding production breakthroughs have made him a pioneer in world food production.

Niederhauser graduated in 1939 with what was the highest academic average ever recorded to that time in the Cornell University College of Agriculture. He received his doctorate and was appointed to the staff at Cornell as an assistant professor in the Department of Plant Pathology.

In 1948, he accepted a position with the newly formed Mexico-Rockefeller Foundation Agricultural Program, a project helping to alleviate hunger in food-deficient regions of the world. Before he departed for Mexico, a former administrator at Cornell warned him, "Nobody will ever hear of you again."

NIEDERHAUSER NAMED LAUREATE/ADD TWO

Indeed, they would hear of him again. Since that day, Niederhauser has made several important advancements toward the blight-resistant potato, a variety unharmed by the late blight disease which devastated the fields of Europe over 100 years ago.

Poland is the second largest potato producing country in the world. However, potato farmers in Poland have had little or no access to fertilizers or fungicides, thus leaving their crops exposed to blight attack when weather is favorable.

In 1982, Niederhauser began his collaboration of a Polish program to develop blight-tolerant varieties using resistant potato germplasm from Mexico. Yields in the test plots were 50-100 percent greater than the surrounding fields. The new technology is spreading rapidly from farm to farm.

Niederhauser helped develop a Mexican national potato program in 1948. Through this program, he worked in the fields with a small group of farmers, stressing applied technologies, such as adequate supplies of healthy seed at planting time, better adapted varieties, disease control, and practical, inexpensive storage to alleviate marketing problems.

Though self-evident today, this strategy of working in the fields with farmers was not well understood or coordinated in many agricultural development efforts. Niederhauser developed the program, taught others and put it to work.



NIEDERHAUSER NAMED LAUREATE/ADD THREE

Niederhauser soon demonstrated the same approach in countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa while still participating in the Mexican program. This led to the development of the Inter-American Potato Program in the late 1950s and the International Potato Program in 1965 with Niederhauser as director.

Following an interview with President Belaunde Terry of Peru in 1968, and using the international potato program he had developed as a base, Niederhauser and his colleagues initiated steps to establish the new International Potato Center (CIP) in Lima, Peru in 1971. During the last 20 years this center has continued the rapid momentum established by Niederhauser. Today, the annual increase in world potato production is greater than that of any other crop.

In 1978, a new strategy for the international transfer of technology and for the simultaneous building of strength and continuity in national programs was designed by Niederhauser.

The national potato programs of 10 countries and the International Potato Center make up an 11-member team called PRECODEPA (Regional Cooperative Potato Program). These countries work together to create and transfer production technology and adapt to the changing problems affecting potato production.

In addition, Niederhauser works as a food production consultant for the Biosphere II project in Tucson, Arizona. Within the next year, eight people will enter this sealed environmental facility and live for two years on the food they produce, including the potato.

NIEDERHAUSER NAMED LAUREATE/ADD FOUR

"The challenge is enormous," said Niederhauser. "By 2010, if there is a trip to Mars, the crew, using some of the technology developed in the Biosphere II, could produce their own food en route and eliminate one of the major limiting factors of such a trip. Perhaps they could leave such a capsule on Mars where human beings could sustain themselves while doing other studies there."

In addition to his contributions in the scientific arena, Niederhauser also founded Little League Baseball in Mexico in 1954 and was the Latin American Commissioner until 1970.